



UNCCD COP 12 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 14 OCTOBER 2015

UNCCD COP 12 participants discussed agenda items in the CST and CRIC during parallel morning and afternoon sessions, and met in contact groups to discuss draft decisions related to the COP, CRIC and CST agendas.

CRIC

UNCCD REPORTING AND REVIEW PROCESS IN VIEW OF THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA: Additional procedures or institutional mechanisms to assist the COP in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention:

The Secretariat introduced document ICCD/CRIC(14)/10, noting it builds on: parties' feedback to the CRIC 13 Non-paper 2; relevant provisions in COP 11 Decision 18; and recommendations by the IWG as well as parties (ICCD/CRIC(13)/9 and (ICCD/COP(12)/4). She said the aim is to, *inter alia*: direct reviews of the Convention towards substance rather than institutional processes, and adjust their frequency accordingly; integrate the CRIC with scientific advice; and ensure regional governance and continuity.

SWAZILAND, with UGANDA, MOLDOVA, COLOMBIA, INDIA, TURKEY and others said a decision on this issue is "premature," emphasizing that the CRIC's workload is likely to increase in light of LDN discussions. While supporting greater integration of the CRIC and CST, ARGENTINA, with CUBA, BRAZIL, CHINA and others, expressed concern that the proposals are not based on a COP mandate and do not reflect discussions at CRIC 13. Supported by COLOMBIA, UGANDA said regional meetings should not "undermine" the CRIC. Noting there is "no global target for the Convention," BRAZIL called for a consensus-based definition of LDN, and opposed the "earmarking" of resources for LDN reviews, considering their voluntary nature. INDIA, PAKISTAN and others highlighted possible contradictions between national and international data. CHINA, with MOLDOVA, called for the COP to reconsider financing for its subsidiary bodies. IRAQ noted the need to bridge the gap between scientific conferences and UNCCD policy making.

Improving the procedures for communication and reporting: The Secretariat introduced ICCD/COP(12)/CST/3-ICCD/CRIC(14)/7, noting the examination of trends in land cover, productivity and carbon stocks within the 14-country LDN pilot project. NAMIBIA and GRENADA identified lessons learned from the project, including the need for: science-based national data, or in its absence, global data; political motivation; and progress indicators. BRAZIL lauded the focus on arid and semi-arid areas. NAMIBIA, SENEGAL and BHUTAN highlighted their experiences in LDN target-setting and implementation. ARMENIA, NIGER and ARGENTINA called for capacity building, technical support and funding, including from the private sector. IRAQ suggested staff training.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC and GHANA requested clarification on the global applicability of the pilot indicators. IRAN sought clarification on the difference between the LDN and previous SLM projects. CHINA suggested developing uniform technical guidelines and, with EL SALVADOR, urged the Secretariat to collaborate with other Convention bodies on a LDN monitoring system. PERU underscored the need to integrate LDN indicators within national, regional and local plans. THAILAND suggested highlighting LDN benefits for livelihood improvement and food security. INDIA stressed developing bottom-up indicators in common with the SDG process.

The GM presented document ICCD/CRIC(14)/8 on the refinement of the progress indicators under Strategic Objective 4. BRAZIL suggested that COP 12 consider a document presented at CRIC 13 (ICCD/CRIC(13)/7/Rev.1), which estimated the contributions of developed countries at 10% of those of developing countries.

The Secretariat introduced document ICCD/CRIC(14)/9, on feedback from the 2013 performance reporting exercise. There was no discussion on this item.

EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION AT THE NATIONAL, SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS: Securing of Additional Investments - Relations with Financial Mechanisms:

The GEF presented its programmes and projects for financing the agreed incremental costs of desertification activities (ICCD/CRIC(14)/5), highlighting: the increase in allocations to the land degradation focal area under GEF-6 to US\$431 million; the allocation of US\$346 million to individual countries through the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR); and progress in SLM synergies with the GEF adaptation trust funds.

INDIA, UGANDA, EGYPT, GHANA and others called for an allocation to this focal area comparable to that for climate change and biodiversity. UGANDA and PAKISTAN underscored the importance of the GEF Small Grants Program. GUINEA called for more micro-finance projects. PAKISTAN and ERITREA requested simplification of the GEF procedures for accessing funds.

CONSIDERATION OF BEST PRACTICES: Promoting the analysis and dissemination of best practices:

The Secretariat highlighted the work of the Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal (SKBP) and referred to SLM technologies, access to data and cooperation between the CRIC and the CST (ICCD/COP(12)/CST/7-ICCD/CRIC(14)/6).

ARGENTINA called for secured funding for the SLM best practice database. BRAZIL highlighted the SKBP's role in knowledge sharing. CHINA pointed to language discrepancies. MOLDOVA called for further expansion of the SKPB. ERITREA and BURKINA FASO shared examples of their best practices. The GAMBIA shared stakeholder engagement



processes. ENDA-TM, for CSOs, shared examples of land regeneration, agroforestry and sanitation, and efforts to develop “communities of practice” to ensure sustained interaction.

CST

CST WORK PROGRAMME: Options for improving the CST inputs to decision-making, including through synergies with other relevant scientific conferences: CST 12 Chair Uriel Safriel (Israel) invited delegates to continue discussing this issue. TANZANIA proposed a sub-component to establish a scientific peer-reviewed journal under UNCCD focused on DLDD and LDN. The EU, CHINA and TURKEY supported decoupling the Scientific Conferences from official CST sessions, while MOROCCO questioned how this would operate. The US acknowledged progress on the science-policy interface over recent years and, with NORWAY and JAPAN, said the SPI is inadequately leveraging the use of existing knowledge and mechanisms. ARGENTINA, CUBA, SWITZERLAND and SENEGAL supported regional mechanisms. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION suggested that a regional approach could support the translation of COP decisions into local action. UKRAINE and MALI said national coordinators could identify relevant experts, and ITALY called for turning decisions into practice. ARGENTINA and TURKEY raised the lack of gender balance in the roster of experts. KENYA suggested creating a link between the roster of experts and the work of the SPI. CSOs said the Convention should avoid creating redundant validation and monitoring processes.

Mariam Akhtar-Schuster, Co-Chair of the SPI, responded to comments, recalling that the SPI is not independent of the UNCCD, and that it comprises 10 independent scientists, the five CST Bureau members, five regional representatives, as well as three observers from CSOs and intergovernmental organizations. She said the recommendation is to adopt a flexible approach within the scientific work of the CST, based on the most efficient way for the SPI to look into issues forwarded to it by the COP.

Follow-up on the post-2015 development agenda: Monitoring progress towards a SDG on land degradation and associated target: Alganesh Guellaw (Ethiopia) and Guido Bonati (Italy) presented the lessons learned from using three indicators through the LDN pilot project.

MALI asked if the global data are sufficient to develop robust indicators at different scales. BELARUS, SWITZERLAND and the PHILIPPINES responded that national data support this process, but may be limited or require additional capacity. BELARUS drew attention to the cost of national monitoring. MOROCCO noted potentially false readings in global remote sensing data from invasive alien species. SWITZERLAND advised on the inclusion of a review of ecosystem services, including the social trade-offs arising from policy decisions. SOUTH AFRICA said the cost of remote sensing can vary significantly. TURKEY noted the importance of information on the water economy and green economy, among others. The US supported using existing data sets to avoid delays in LDN assessment and monitoring. MEXICO said the results of the pilot schemes need to be made available. GRENADA highlighted the value of high resolution data in the LDN evaluation. NAMIBIA suggested that methods can be complemented with ground truthing. CHINA regretted not being one of the pilot projects. TURKMENISTAN asked if feedback has been provided from a decision-maker’s point of view. EGYPT asked how the report could reach decision makers. TANZANIA asked about “leakage,” noting that if a project is conserving one forest but people are moving to another forest, the net result should be accounted for. FAO stressed that those without remote sensing skills should be informed about what the indicators can reveal about LDN trends. The Secretariat acknowledged that global data are seen as complementary to national monitoring.

Follow-up on the post-2015 development agenda: Monitoring the contribution of sustainable land use and management to climate change adaptation/mitigation and

to the safeguarding of biodiversity and ecosystem services: Barron Orr and Annette Cowie, SPI, introduced this agenda item, based on documents ICCD/COP(12)/CST/3-ICCD/CRIC(14)/7 and ICCD/COP(12)/CST/INF.1. They noted that SLM is pivotal to obtaining multiple global benefits simultaneously and that there is scope for synergy in the joint implementation of the three Rio Conventions. They suggested considering the development of a Global Drylands Observing System (GDOS).

The US and SWITZERLAND asked how a GDOS would add value without further financial burden. ARGENTINA and MEXICO suggested case studies could aid in closing gaps in the monitoring framework. TURKEY said adaptation is not the same as resilience. MOROCCO said the former affects the latter. SWITZERLAND highlighted the relevance of the SDG indicators process. KENYA noted the complexity of such synergies across the Rio Conventions owing to differing national institutional responsibilities. NIGER highlighted challenges from differing convention reporting guidelines.

Responding to comments, Orr and Cowie said the proposal is to ensure drylands observations are considered by the Rio Conventions. On joint reporting, they noted efforts to ensure scientific aspects are actionable from the policy perspective.

LINKING SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE WITH DECISION MAKING: Work programme of the SPI for the Biennium 2016-2017: The Secretariat introduced documents ICCD/COP(12)/CST/6 and ICCD/COP(12)/CST/INF.4. Martial Bernoux, SPI, presented the collaboration between the SPI and the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS), highlighting the LDN target of the SDGs, the need for indicators to address soil and land issues under the three Rio Conventions, and soil organic carbon.

ERITREA and ITALY emphasized the importance of soils. BRAZIL cautioned against the SPI going beyond the Convention’s objectives, saying it should avoid addressing soils and climate issues. SENEGAL stressed identifying the most important elements of LDN to improve monitoring and synergies and, with MEXICO, welcomed steps by the SPI to partner with other processes. Bernoux said ITPS is looking at improving soil monitoring techniques and making them more cost-effective.

CONTACT GROUPS

Programme and Budget and CRIC: During a lunch-time meeting, the Secretariat clarified the placement of capacity building activities in the budget and identified the Convention’s working capital reserve, among other issues. Participants asked about hosting considerations for CRIC meetings, funding for regional meetings, and the justification for reclassifying advertised posts. Others requested clarification on the finances allotted to implementation activities.

COW Contact Group on Matters Other than Programme and Budget: This group meet during lunch and in the evening.

Joint CRIC/CST: During an evening meeting, this group began an initial exchange of views on the draft decision on communication and reporting procedures, which covers, *inter alia*: progress indicators and associated methodologies for reporting on Strategic Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4, and adjustment of reporting procedures, including financial support provided to reporting.

IN THE CORRIDORS

With the High-Level Segment approaching, delegates indicated they are feeling pressure to present their Ministers with a concrete agenda. In this light, the presentation of preliminary findings from the LDN project was welcomed by many delegates, with some remarking that the exercise highlights the complexity of integrating the SDGs with the Strategy. Others wondered whether the scheduling of parallel discussions on the topic in both the CST and CRIC represented a lost opportunity, especially since the CST had just finished its discussion of mechanisms to bring more scientific advice into Convention decisions.